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New York State Education Department

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To Hon. D. Fish  
With sincere regards  
A. S. Draper

LINCOLN

BY  
ANDREW S. DRAPER, LL.B., LL.D.  
*Commissioner of Education*

ALBANY, N. Y.  
1909

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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN



## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

No man has expressed the feelings of America so well as President Lincoln, and no man in this or any other land has been more truly great. He was the child of poor parents. He was born in a log cabin. He went to school but little, because he lived where there were no schools. When a boy and young man he worked hard with his hands and it gave him a healthy body. He studied a few good books and it gave him a clear head. He liked history. He mastered mathematics and did surveying. He was interested in politics, and his mind grasped the laws easily. He read about the principles of government, and thought about the rights of men. He became a lawyer. He was elected to the Legislature of Illinois, and then to the Congress of the United States. The experiences thus gained helped to make him a successful lawyer. He was much interested in the affairs of the people, in universal justice, and in the good of his country. He thought for himself, and he thought hard and straight. He had a keen sense of humor and a fine gift of wit. He wrote so plainly, and he spoke in public so clearly, that all the people could understand him. But he had even greater qualities. His habits were simple and he lived without great show. He was true and sincere, and the people believed in him. All these things made him a leader, a statesman, and a very great man. The country was deeply agitated about slavery. It had existed in all of the states in earlier years, and it then existed in all of the Southern States, where there were five millions of slaves. He abhorred human bondage, but he abhorred war also. The laws allowed slavery in the South, and he thought it impossible to change the laws and abolish slavery without bringing on a war between the Northern and the Southern States. He hoped for an easier and better way. But many tried to carry slavery into the new states and territories that were being formed beyond the Mississippi river. He was opposed to that, whether war came or not. He spoke hundreds of times against it, and what he said made him President of the United States. This brought on a dreadful war, which lasted four years. Great armies of citizens were organized to save the Union. Half a million of the best men in the country,

North and South, lost their lives. There was sorrow in nearly every family, and distress in almost every home. In the midst of the war President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all the slaves. It was the greatest act of a great and noble President, who was right in his reasoning, clear in his statements, courageous in his acts, and humane in his treatment of all upon whom the war brought misfortune. He thought little of himself. He wanted, above all things, to save the Union. He was very happy when he came to believe that he could make the nation wholly free and save the Union at the same time. Guided by God, in whom he believed, he led the forces of Freedom and Union to a splendid national triumph; and all, including the people of the South, are now glad of it. The abolition of slavery brought freedom to all who live under the flag of the Union, and opened the way for us to become a more united and a very much greater nation. Just as the war ended, when President Lincoln was fifty-six years old, he was assassinated, and all the people mourned as never before or since. His life was the best expression we have ever had of the humanity, the industry, the sense, the conscience, the freedom, the justice, the progress, the unity, and the destiny of the Nation. His memory is our best human inspiration.

## WHAT MAKES LINCOLN GREAT?



## WHAT MAKES LINCOLN GREAT?

From the close of the Revolution to the crisis of the Civil War slavery was the ever present obstacle to the union of the states. It was not a live question until union was possible and necessary. The mother country had approved slavery, and all the colonies had participated in it. It had vanished in the North because not right and not profitable, and it had become established in the South because all the conditions favored it and the moral sense did not disapprove it. The South was rich in property and weak in numbers, and the North was strong in people and poor in pocket. And the South was not lacking in moral sensibilities. Society was quite as highly developed and religion quite as much in force in the Carolinas as in New England. All the colonies had planned and fought together for independence, and all had done much that was vital for the Union. But slavery obstructed the formation of a Union that could live; it menaced the constitutional convention almost to the point of dissolution; it threatened to destroy the Union after it had been created.

The "more perfect union" was the result of a necessity that was absolute. The constitution was the splendid creation of educated and sagacious statesmanship, of superior patriotism, and of proper concessions to situations and opinions. In all this the North and the South had equal share. The recognition of slavery and the express protection of the foreign slave trade for twenty years was the heavy price which had to be paid for the constitution itself. Heavy as it was, it was well to pay it, and there is no ground for recrimination about it now. All the states agreed to the rendition of slaves, to the counting of slaves on the basis of representation, and to a tax upon slaves imported. For the protection of the slave trade, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut voted with Maryland, the two Carolinas, and Georgia, while Virginia voted against it. The lives of states, like the lives of men, have their inconsistencies. When the adoption of the constitution had been wrested from reluctant states, the bondage of men and women, within circumscribed limits, became legalized in the Republic which was being dedicated to the principle that all men stand equal before the law.

Then commenced the long and acrimonious struggle for the admission of slavery into common territory and into new states. Communication was slow and contacts were few. The sections came together but little, either directly or through the press. There were large accessions of territory and other great states were coming into view. Washington was the arena in which freedom and slavery battled for their own. Learning and oratory were the instruments of each. But slavery was more aggressive because the more directly concerned. War was frequently threatened, and once employed. The Union was at all times in danger. Compromise followed compromise. From each conflict slavery emerged with the advantage upon her side. At the turning point of the last century the hope of the makers of the constitution had not been realized. Freedom was more crippled and humiliated; slavery was more aggressive and defiant. The nation was not becoming wholly free. It was apparently becoming wholly slave.

The constitution prohibited Congress from legislating against the slave trade until 1808. In the next year, in a hovel in the Kentucky wilderness, a man child was born. It is lacking nothing in reverence to say that he was to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," or that he was to "deliver his people from an overwhelming sin." He came to his full stature at the turning point of the century, just as the freedom of his country stood most vitally in need of a prophet and a knight.

Abraham Lincoln was surely a child of those whom, with apt discrimination, he called the "plain people." The study of his genealogy may fascinate students, but his ancestry is not material to his memory. His forefathers are interesting to us because he is interesting to us, but they can neither help nor harm his fame. The little child who appeared in the log cabin a hundred years ago, was fifty-six years later carried to his burial amid profound and universal mourning. That is the ground of his rights to greatness in America. His life was great. He had a noble mission in the world and nobly he fulfilled it. It was but well begun when death overtook him. His memory looms greater with every passing year. His life was the finest expression we have of the best attributes of American character, and his memory is our highest inspiration to be plain, sane, true, tolerant, patient, aggressive, and hopeful, as a nation.

In preëminent degree he was the embodiment of the homely virtues. He lived plainly and soberly. He refused to overreach

and he met all of his personal obligations. He was a good neighbor and a firm friend. He discouraged unprofitable controversy. He tried his lawsuits without embittering his adversaries. He helped the ward, the town, the county, and the state, in which he lived. He had wit and humor. He could tell an apt story and make a good speech. Admirable as these qualities were, they were in themselves only enough to save him from mediocrity and lift him into respectability. Genius may win fame without them. Though noble and perhaps necessary contributions to real greatness, other qualities must supplement the common virtues before greatness is attained.

If Lincoln had not an orderly and legal mind by nature, it was early and easily made so by youthful study of a few of the books which could give it texture and vitality. The mathematics which he loved made it click with exactness. He laid a boy's firm grasp upon the fundamentals of the law—its history, its philosophy, its spirit, its purposes, and its methods. Decisions were only incidents. He reasoned from the groundwork of society up to the matter in hand. His purposes were sound and his logic inexorable. He was successful. He tried more cases at the Circuit, and argued more appeals in the Supreme Court, than any other man in Illinois. This contributed to, but it did not reach the height of his greatness.

Much, but not too much, has been made of his activity in politics. He looked after the political organization. He saw to it that the delegates were to his liking. He did much thinking for the conventions. He husbanded the patronage and used it. He joined issues and wrote platforms. He led his party, and laid intellectual pitfalls and political ambushes for his adversaries. He was often a candidate for office, was often chosen, and often beaten. He spent weeks and months together "preaching the gospel" and "cultivating the vineyard" from Galena to Cairo. But he derived no commercial profit from politics. Rather, he contributed much more than his share. He was always poor. Frequently he left politics and returned to the law to earn a living. He never seems to us—nor was he, in fact—a mere office seeker. He never depended upon place. He never dissipated in politics. He was in public life for a purpose. He absolved himself from all political activity for years together when he saw no principles at stake, nor new ground to be gained. He cared nothing for ward, city, or county places. Statecraft fascinated him. He thought deeply. He had a surprisingly clear

outlook. He was concerned about the rights of men and about a government that could endure. He knew the people, for he was one of them; and he spoke so plainly and convincingly that he gained a following. We now know that he had become a statesman, and we now see that his politics was but a mere incident to his statesmanship. Some of the elements of his real greatness began to appear, as his activity in politics was an accessory to it; but rustling in politics was far, very far, from the summit of it.

It is not to be denied that he was fortunate in his opportunity. Manifestly he did not think so. Few other men would have thought so. The man who thought only of that at the time would have missed the opportunity. But looking backward we see it. Stephen A. Douglas was a great man. History will not deny his patriotism or his statesmanship. He was the foremost political orator of his time, until he met Lincoln in joint debate. If he then ceased to be, it was because Lincoln had the qualities which could make the most of his freer opportunities and the better cause. Douglas was not only a senatorial star of the first magnitude, but he was unquestionably the recognized leader of the great political party which had been dominant in the country since that fateful morning when, at the break of day, Adams started off for Massachusetts in a pet which refused to let him induct Jefferson into the great office for which the senator was supremely ambitious and which it was the common expectation that he would reach. Illinois was a democratic state. Illinois was the political "borough" of Douglas, and political arts had been employed to set the lines so that he could hold it against any popular majority which a passing storm might throw up against him. To contest the political position, and the very political life, of Senator Douglas, among a people who had long considered him their greatest man, could not have seemed an enviable opportunity to Lincoln.

But something beyond our ken rules great events, and that something, without his knowing it, made it Lincoln's opportunity. The repeal of the "Compromises" opened up the slavery question anew and with unprecedented fury. More than once Lincoln had shown his independence of party in the interest of the freedom of black men, but his veneration for the constitution and the laws kept him from abolitionism. Abhorring slavery with all his great soul, he abhorred war also. He knew, above almost every other man, that slavery was intrenched in law; that an invasion of territory or a violation of the compacts of the constitution, to

free the slaves, would force a war which might not remove the evil, and which might sever the union of the states and obstruct the advance of democracy in the world. He grasped a vain hope in the unexpected. Before the extreme of overt war, slavery might be rooted out by a tidal wave of feeling, or restricted by negotiation. The slaves might be paid for by the government and set free. And if war were to come, there was nothing more important than that it should not come before the nation could sustain it, and that even then it should be a war of the slave power against the Union, rather than a war of freedom against an institution which was sanctioned by long usage and supported by the fundamental law.

The people were dazed by the menace of a cataclysm. Parties were disintegrating and a new alignment was at hand. The Whig party was at an end. The Democratic party was dividing; the Democratic national leader and the Democratic president had parted company. The Republican party was beginning to show some coherency, but was without aggressive organization. Some of the men who were yet to lead it were playing small politics with one faction or the other of the opposition. At this juncture Senator Douglas devised the doctrine that the new states should settle the slavery question for themselves; that it should be held to be a local and not a national question; that each state should vote slavery up or down as the majority saw fit. It was a specious doctrine, and upon it the great senator went back to Illinois to seek a reelection to the Senate.

Lincoln joined the issue. A voice that was familiar to Illinois now began to be heard by the nation. It was heard because it had something to say, and because Senator Douglas was obliged to reply to it. It said that a house divided against itself could not stand; that the nation would become all slave or all free; that whereas there had been reason to expect it would become all free, there was now extreme danger that it would become all slave; that the natural state of the country was one of freedom; that if there were reasons why slavery should be endured in old slave territory, there was no reason why it should be allowed to come into territory already inherently free; that slavery was a moral wrong and no majority could make it right; and that the power to vote the slave system into free territory was never to be upheld and never to be conferred by a free people.

It was the greatest political debate in our history. It was carried to every part of the state. It raged from July to November.

There were hundreds of meetings, and seven of them in representative centers of the state were joint, and attended by vast multitudes. At the onset the senator alluded to his adversary as a "kind, amiable, intelligent gentleman," but such patronizing pleasantry soon ceased, for ample cause. There was much sparring for position, great parades and much noise and clatter, plenty of humor and assumed politeness, no dearth of invective, and no lack of seriousness and ardor. Lincoln was a lance so free that not even his friends could limit or direct him, and very often his thrusts reached a vital part. If he had the stronger moral argument, he was no less equipped in legal learning, and he kept the better natured. Without apparent thought of self, he did a master's work upon the ship of state. When the election came, the Legislature was with Douglas, but the popular majority was with Lincoln. He had, fortunately, lost the senatorship; but he had come to be the available candidate of a rapidly consolidating party for the presidency. And he had shown the intellectual virility and the moral courage which did so much to make him great.

The election of Lincoln made war inevitable. He knew this better than any other man in the country. The men of the South expected secession, because they anticipated Lincoln's election and quickly realized the meaning of it. Before the election was held they began to assemble the machinery of separation and independence, and the moment the result was reached they started it with all celerity. Before the inauguration, seven states had formally assumed to go out of the Union. Their natural rectitude, their consistent thinking, and their pride, left no other course open to the statesmen of the South. But they had no reason to count upon a sanguinary war. They had reason enough to think that the North would not accept the gauge of battle. Some of the strongest friends of freedom and union were advising that they be allowed to depart in peace. In the election the North had spoken, but the South did not know the North, and the South looked upon Lincoln as a mere lawyer and politician. No better did the North know the South. Nor did the North know itself. Neither realized the conscientiousness, the caliber, or the heroism of the other. Indeed, neither knew the fighting qualities that were within itself. When the dogs of war were once let loose all the packs were eager enough, but before the chase was really on neither side knew its own strength, and each underestimated the resources and the spirit of the other.

No one, North or South, unless it were Lincoln, suspected that such a war was close at hand.

But Lincoln knew both peoples — the people of the North and the people of the South — as well as did any living man. By birth and knowledge of the situations and temperament of the people of the South, he was almost as much a southern man as the President of the Southern Confederacy himself. When war came his family, relatives and friends were in both armies. He was at the center of information, and a keen student of the rights, the logic, and the advantages of situations. He knew also about the things in the constitution which protected slavery in the slave states. He knew about all the other things in the constitution. He regarded all parts of the constitution. He understood, moreover, the powers and the responsibilities of the presidential office. He knew the sacred character of the Union. He believed there could be no union with slavery. He believed there could be no liberty without union. It was not more a matter of opinion than of fervor; not so much a matter of policy as of conscience. He knew the terms of the oath he was to take. That oath was as inviolable as the Bible upon which it was taken. That constitution and that oath meant that the government revenues were to be collected in every port, and the government mails were to go unhindered upon every highway. The rights of men, the legal system, the temples of freedom, established by the armies of Washington, were to be upheld. Nothing but the inability to maintain the Union by supreme physical effort could determine that the Union was without the power to maintain itself. Of all men, Lincoln knew that war was at hand. His knowledge of the fact and the reasons which made the fact inevitable were among the elements which made him great.

It was a serious, weird, prophetic figure that moved slowly out of the pioneer West to the helm of state. He spoke many times, but he said he was not ready to speak: he declared that he was anxious to hear, but that when the time came he would speak with no uncertain sound. He did so speak. He spoke in an English style so pure that it has become distinctive wherever English is upon the tongues of men. He spoke in sorrow and with affection. He spoke with all caution and yet with all distinctness. He left no room for doubt. He put the burden of the war upon those who in unhappy passion would paralyze the laws and sever the Union. Arguing that "no state upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union," and that "resolves or

ordinances to that effect are legally void; and acts of violence against the authority of the United States are insurrectionary or revolutionary," he declared with all solemnity that he would execute the laws; that there need be no bloodshed and would be none unless forced upon the national authority; and just as the last moment came he took the inaugural address upon his knee, and in genuine affection added, "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy it, while I shall have a solemn one to protect, preserve, and defend it." But there was no other way. War had to be. Nothing less than the magnificent repulse of the heroic charge of Pickett's division at Gettysburg could settle the question.

Lincoln could lay the field of diplomacy and arrange the plan of war, as well as the groundwork of legal or political discussion. Much more, this sagacious and gentle knight of the forum and the hustings proved at once that he could be the very reservoir of power, the very genius of administration, the very incarnation of war. Without much reverence for form, without any false worship of precedent, he used practical ways to accomplish practical ends. Quickly he rose above the commonplace. He would attend to little things when beseeched, but his mind sought the great things. There were great men in Congress, but he led them. There were very great men, who were very unlike, in the Cabinet, but he dominated their every important act. He hesitated not a moment in determining the foreign relations of the government. But of course the vital concerns were at his hand. He coaxed and coerced and held the states that were upon the border line of conflict. He was always kind and always stern. The sufferings of a soldier, or the grief of a woman unnerved him, but he lacked nothing in steadiness or strength when it came to using the resources of the country for the saving of the Union. With a great heart which brooded over the agonies of conflict, he gathered all the forces and sharpened all the instruments of war. He knew the temper of soldiers who were American free-men. He was impatient at inaction. He lost no opportunity to aid a private soldier or inspire an army. He gave all the credit and the glory to a general who won victories, and he visited his grieved and stinging censure upon one who refused the opportunity of battle after a success in the fear of loss of personal and professional prestige. He would hold a general's horse, or re-

move him from command, if he thought that the one thing or the other would bring another victory. When success came, he made it the base of broader undertakings which could not be attempted without it. If disaster overtook the Union arms, as it often did, he stood with bowed head and bleeding heart, but still dauntless, in its awful presence. He effaced himself completely and, partizan though he was, he rose above all partizanship. He proposed to give over his place to the political opposition if that would more completely unify the North, but when it would not, and he had to fight for reelection, he did it with his old-time sagacity. The result proved that he better than any other could unify the North. And the consolidating sentiment of the North carried the awful struggle to its consummation. Manassas, Antietam, Shiloh, Chickamauga, Vicksburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, are some of the names that exemplify the vicissitudes of the long struggle and express the gallantry of Americans, North and South. When the white light of peace broke at Appomattox it lighted a Union that would need time for convalescence, but was free enough to live: and the lifting clouds revealed something of the enduring proportions of Lincoln.

War changed the legal status of slavery. States could not both repudiate and invoke the constitution. The slave system could not claim protection from a government whose very life it was seeking to undo. Property is the lawful prize of war. It is singularly so when the property is in slaves who are made to add human energy to the inert forces of war. The first flash at Sumter changed the legal situation. Accommodation was possible no longer. Slavery or the Union was to die. New laws were to come right speedily. The goddess of justice, which had always protected the master, made ready to help the slave. If the Union were to live, the falling of the sword which would shatter the shackles and set men and women free had come to be a question of strength and of events. Happily, the man who had so fondly wished that "all men everywhere might be free" was to determine when the powers of the commander in chief, and the physical strength of the army and navy of the United States, made it both possible and expedient to set men free.

Patriots and moralists could see no room for hesitation. The North was divided. The war drew heavily upon its resources. There was mourning in every home. The result was far from certain. Success depended upon sentiment. The border states

were always in the balance. With those who urged the moral rights of man were the many who insisted that the President should find express authority for all he did in the constitution and the laws which had never anticipated such a crisis, and those others in overwhelming numbers who demanded that a war for the Union should never be changed into a war for abolition. Old friends left him. The blinding storm raged all about him, and the rolling waves of bitterness and abuse broke at his very feet. With the proclamation in his own handwriting in his private desk, known to none but himself and his God, he was the fortress of the situation. "What I do or leave undone about slavery, I do or I abstain from doing to save the Union." The Union was the only temple upon which Liberty could rest her foot. In his waiting, as in his doing, he exemplified the qualities which make him great.

The supreme satisfaction in Lincoln's life must have come when he could believe that emancipation would give added strength to the armies and help save the Union. None knew better than he that it meant more to the white man than to the black. If it gave the one his chance, it saved the other from his sin. If it freed a race, it freed a nation also. If it gave a race its physical freedom, it gave the nation its moral opportunity. It made possible such a unity of the Republic as had never been, and it opened the way for an outworking of democracy in industry, in politics, in education, and in religion, which is the marvel of the world, and which projects its light and its power into the obscure recesses of the coming ages.

It would be a frightful perversion of this hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln if a word should be spoken which is out of key with the spirit of the man. In the very midst of war he had no words but those of considerateness and kindness for the people of the South. Only two months before he died he tried without avail to convert his Cabinet to compensation for the slaves. In his great second inaugural he declared the national, rather than the sectional, responsibility for slavery. A week before he died he walked up the streets of Richmond with "Tad's" hand in his, and went around the block to call at the home of General Pickett, who led the awful charge at Gettysburg. Mrs Pickett opened the door, with a baby in her arms. "I am Abraham Lincoln," he said. "Oh! you are the President," the surprised woman answered. "No, I am George Pickett's old friend from Illinois." Then he took the baby in his arms and

kissed it. This restored the Union at one point at least. He expressly informed the War Department and the generals in the field that they must not assume to settle any political questions. He was, and he intended to be, the best friend the South could have, and its overwhelming misfortune came in his melancholy death. Yet we must not dare to forget that more than generosity was in his soul. Justice, as well as gentleness; sternness as well as magnanimity; "faith in the right," as well as "charity for all"; greatness, as well as generosity, were all his. The occasions determined the applications. Through it all, he left no rough word and no mean act to degrade the great things he did. In what he said, in what he did, in what he forebore, appear the qualities which make him great.

Forty-four years have come and gone since Lincoln died. There were great men and great leaders before him, and there have been great men and great leaders since him. Another generation is here. It is a free and a discriminating generation. It ranks him above all others. He is one of us, the child of American opportunity. He has given the truest ring and the sweetest harmony to the spirit of his country. No man, no combination of men, could change it; the spirit of the nation is attuned to the spirit of Lincoln, and so it will remain forever. That is the overwhelming thing which makes Lincoln great.

There is one star in the heavens which men know before all the other stars. Taken by itself alone, it is an ordinary star among the stars. It is not of the first magnitude: yet it is in good company. It is one of a brilliant constellation which always attracts the eye. It has supreme importance in itself, for it is so near the polar axis of the earth that the world and all the stars seem to swing around it. It is always in sight in the United States. Its fixedness and stability make it the guide and the helper of practical men. The magnetic needles point to it. On land or sea, the traveler looks to it and feels sure upon his course. What the north star is to the natural life of the world, Lincoln is to the political science of the Republic and the moral sense of men.

Do any of us think that it was a matter of chance? Then we think that day and night, the rains and the dew, the winds and the tides, the fertility of the earth, the crops in their seasons, the colors and the fragrance of the flowers, magnetism and electricity, the sun and the stars, are matters of chance.

It was in the divine plan, and not the mere accident of chance. The God who put the north star in the heavens made Lincoln. The God of the Bible and of the creation, the God of the Hebrew prophets and of the Christians, the God of the unfolding centuries, the God who has helped freedom in all ages and in all lands, the God who gave wisdom to the men of the Constitutional Convention and victory to the arms of the Union at Gettysburg — He made Lincoln great. And in the plenitude of His powers, and in the outworking of His plans, He makes Lincoln greater and greater, year by year.

**THE MORAL ADVANCES IN LINCOLN'S  
POLITICAL CAREER**



## THE MORAL ADVANCES IN LINCOLN'S POLITICAL CAREER

Next Friday it will be eight and forty years since Abraham Lincoln was the guest of this State and of this city. He was the president elect. He was on a journey which has become historic. He was going to a place which was already great, but which he was to make very much greater in human history. The schools were closed, and I saw him emerge from the train where the railroad crosses north Broadway, kept abreast of his carriage upon the slow march down Broadway and up State street to the old Capitol, and heard his brief address from the porch, beyond which boys of twelve, who were without influence, very properly were not allowed to go.

His was an unusual figure. His extreme height was accentuated by his leanness and by a silk hat which was tall and straight like its owner. Yet there was nothing odd, nothing amusing, nothing ungainly, in the appearance of the man. He was the child of western pioneers, and a pioneer of pioneers himself, but in figure, face and dress he would have looked very much at home in a Congregational church in New England. He was sinewy, strong and stalwart—the figure of an athlete, for an artist. He could take an axe by the end of the helve and hold it straight, with his arm upon a line with his shoulder. In the state convention which determined to present him for the presidency, some enthusiasts from his early country home brought in some walnut rails which they said he had split, and the convention undertook to have him say whether or not that were so. He answered that there was no way of identifying those particular rails, but he could say in truth that he had split a great many that were just as good. He was always at his ease on horseback. Coming up our Capitol hill over the cobblestone pavement, he stood erect, true, and imposing in his jolting carriage, and removed his tall hat to the cheering crowds upon either side, with a grace that was a part of the absolute naturalness and genuineness of the man. Too much has been said about his awkwardness and his forbidding dress. There was no more shambling in his gait than in his mind or in his morals. He

sometimes wore a shawl, but the shawl was an article of men's street apparel in his day. His dress was as unconventional as the man was original and independent. But there was nothing extreme, certainly nothing freakish, about it all. The physical man, and his dress, and his stalwart character, and his sane and independent thinking went together, and together they fitted into the body of the people of whom he was one, while they seemed appropriate enough to the great station which he was called upon to fill.

He was then fifty-two years old. He was born in a cabin in the western wilderness, of a father who never succeeded, and of a mother who had some of the blood and many of the traits of gentleness. He has said that his childhood could all be expressed by the one line in Grey's *Elegy* which speaks of "The short and simple annals of the poor." In youth he was accustomed to severe labor of the hand. He worked in a store and became a leader in the badinage of the neighborhood. At odd moments he read the Bible and Shakespeare many times, and studied Euclid until he had mastered the demonstrations. He became fascinated with the structure of society and with the sources, the forces, the history, the philosophy, and the applications of the law. He had enough to say. He developed a pure, a distinct, and now a well known English style in which to say it. He wrote with all clearness. He spoke with great distinctness. He came to be the foremost lawyer in his state. He came to make as well as to interpret and apply the law. Politics went with the law, and he attracted, managed, and marshaled men. With on-rushing events he became the great war-president of the United States, the great emancipator of the American Republic.

We have no need to dwell upon the external or physical characteristics of this man, for we all know them by heart. But we may well reflect upon the more striking advances of the steadily unfolding moral character which was the soul of Abraham Lincoln, and which gave initiative, direction, and always increasing power to all that he did.

It is one of the elements of his greatness, and one of the satisfactions of his country, that he never lacked in moral character. From first to last he did nothing to bring shame, and said nothing to be taken back. To the conventional he seems unconventional. In childhood, in youth, in manhood, he lived upon the border line between broken and unbroken territory. It is the compensation of primitive life that it is broad and free. Lincoln

was a veritable child of nature. He was a product of the wilderness, and of the prairie, and of society in its liquid state. But he was the heir of the opportunities, as well as of the hindrances, of open situations. He knew both the external and the hidden life of a wondrous people. He was disposed to be like his people. He did not think there was anything very unusual about himself. He was not a radical. He was much censured for it. He was not a conservative. He was much censured for that. He aspired to be an ordinary leader of an ordinary people. He was a practical man of affairs and he used practical means to practical ends. He was part and parcel of the manner of life of his people. His ways were severely plain. He would change places with the humblest. He drew his illustrations from situations and incidents which all could understand. He would have seemed out of place, and perhaps occasions came when he did seem out of place, in the midst of a culture which some one has described as mere lassitude refined. But he was at home wherever there was virile thinking that bore upon the actualities of life. If one knew him only superficially he might seem inconsistent. He was gentle and severe, kind and stern, cautious and aggressive, humorous and melancholy, modest and mighty. From first to last he effaced himself. Within the limitations of the law he venerated, he listened to the great heart which told him what to do. He gained the confidence of his people because, through a life that was full of menace, his personal morals remained unscathed. Love of truth and of justice was the paramount quality in his character, from the wilderness in Kentucky to the presidency. He was always in a struggle, and the struggling gave him strength. Abuse, of which he received more than his share, disciplined but did not embitter him. He towered higher and higher because he attached no undue importance to individuals or to episodes; because he broke through barriers and gained strength by it; because he accomplished things, and mounted upon results to accomplish things that were higher than what had gone before.

His nature was not merely moral. It was religious. His life was moved by something more than a mind which recognized the needs of sane and decent living, and the obligations of men to men. His was a nature which without ostentation expressed its religious feeling. He did not parade, but he did not hide, his feeling. God moved in the life of Lincoln. He did not suppress God in his nature, but made himself the instrument of God's

freedom, opportunity, and effectiveness. From first to last he spoke of this. He spoke of it more commonly to his close friends and in the writings which he did not expect the world to see. But he never withheld the expression when the situation made it seemly and the occasion was serious enough to keep it from being misunderstood.

And with Lincoln religion was not an occasional sentiment. It was not an ecstatic state. It was not an empty form. It was not even a thing satisfied and concluded by membership in a Christian church. It was not alone a thing which made him a devoted husband, and a loving father, and an efficient townsman. It was God in a great mind and in an heroic man. It did not keep him from the affairs of men. It did not narrow him. It never made him exclusive. It did not close his eyes to the realities of life and the attributes of men. It plunged him into struggles. It kept him straight and gave him power in the Legislature, at the hustings, and upon the Illinois circuit. The outworking of it in the places which really try out the souls of men gave him the texture and the fiber and the superb moral and patriotic purpose which could rescue his country, and perhaps self-government in all countries, from what appeared to be insuperable obstacles and opposition. It is that outworking, and that alone, which, in a single generation, has taken Lincoln out of all partizanship and made him a proper theme for our reflections at the regular service of a Christian church.

But all true men grow strong and great not by bounds, but by steps. They grow greater and greater by reason of the greater and greater things done. Let us find some of the particular steps, some of the things done, by which the moral nature of Lincoln grew to such heroic size and such splendid strength.

The Illinois Legislature in 1837, following the ordinary thinking of the times, resolved that "the right of property in slaves is sacred to the slave-holding states." It was twenty-four years before the Civil War. It was a commonplace deduction from the federal Constitution and the laws of Congress and of the states, which was accepted by all save the few ultra and impractical people—the very salt of the earth—who were for abolition without regard for such human things as laws and constitutions. Lincoln, then a member of the State Legislature, was not an abolitionist. He knew about the legal basis and structure of society, and he venerated the Constitution and the laws. That makes it the nobler still that the mere boy of twenty-eight re-

volted. He opposed, but his opposition was unavailing. Ordinary men would not have felt called upon to go beyond the bounds of ordinary opposition. But, despite his own estimate, he was not an ordinary man. He prepared his personal protest in writing, declared that "slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy," procured his colleague from Sangamon county, in which is the city of Springfield, to sign it with him, and required the House to express this protest upon its journal. It was heroic because it invaded a common usage and an accepted doctrine, and struck a note to which no party had dared listen, and at which no lawyer and no leader of opinion had dared strike. We now see what a significant step it was, and we ought to see how it aided harder and longer steps.

With an always growing practice of the law, and an always enlarging leadership in politics, in ten years more Lincoln was a member of the Thirtieth Congress. It embraced a galaxy of great men. Webster, Calhoun, Benton, Cass, Corwin, Collamer, Sam Houston, Simon Cameron, Robert C. Winthrop, Hannibal Hamlin, Horace Greeley, John A. Dix, Jefferson Davis, Alexander H. Stephens, Robert Toombs, and Andrew Johnson, were there. Stephen A. Douglas was promoted from the House to the Senate the day Lincoln entered the House. It was a congress of great events, as well as of great men. Liberty and slavery were in an overt and paroxysmal struggle. The only unholy war in our history, that with Mexico for more slave territory, was on.

Ordinary new members at thirty-eight would have been restrained in such a presence and in the midst of such events. But the protest in the Illinois Legislature made further protests easier. Lincoln's conscience told him that it was an aggressive war of the slave power for more territory in the Southwest to offset the opening and enlarging free territory of the Northwest. The President, who had permitted and helped the war, contended that Mexico had invaded our territory and shed our blood. In thirty days after entering the House, Lincoln broke through a line of great men and through forbidding situations, and offered carefully prepared resolutions in which it was demanded that the President indicate the *spot* within American territory where the first blood had been shed, and he addressed the House at length in support of his demand. Let us recall what the fledgling in Congress could say to the President of the United States: "Let the President" he said, "answer the interrogatories I propose, fully, fairly, candidly, with facts and not with arguments. Let

him remember that he sits where Washington sat, and let him answer as Washington would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no equivocation. If, so answering, he can show that the soil was ours where the first blood of the war was shed, I am with him for his justification." He always voted against the war, but as uniformly voted supplies to the army on the ground that the soldiers were not responsible and must be fed. His opponents in Illinois undertook to call him "Spot" Lincoln and charged him with disloyalty, for all this. He had to meet it many times in the debates with Senator Douglas. But conscience was becoming freer and the expression of it easier and stronger through its exercise in the face of opposition.

Another advance was made through his resolutions in this Congress for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. It is true he satisfied his lawyer mind by providing that it should be upon the majority vote of the District, and that owners should be paid for their slaves, but it gave fresh help to freedom and it went further in cheering Lincoln's sense of justice and his moral courage on their way.

In another ten years we come to the greatest voluntary and moral advance in Lincoln's purely political career. They were years of events which would themselves seem very great but for the greater and nobler ones for which they were unexpectedly opening the way. The hope of the convention that formed the Constitution, that the nation would become wholly free, had proved vain. It was only too apparent that it was in peril of becoming wholly slave. Twice in these ten years Congress had swept away the most solemn compacts which established the bulwarks of at least a sectional freedom. The Supreme Court had decided that slaves might be taken into the territories and yet held and trafficked in. Lincoln feared, with reason enough, that the court would go on and hold that slavery might, with only technical legal limitations, be carried into the free states. The spirit of slavery, rather than that of freedom, was finding hospitality in the courts, and opportunity through the law. The machinery for apprehending and returning fugitive slaves had been made more and more drastic. Political parties had been avoiding exact issues, shuffling for votes, and dissolving into factions. Under such circumstances, in the early summer of 1858, Senator Douglas, the recognized leader of the dominant party in his state and in the nation, the readiest political orator

of the decade, an undoubted patriot, the friend and rival of Lincoln for twenty-five years, went back to Illinois to prosecute a campaign for reelection to the Senate upon a platform empowering the territories and the new states to have slavery or not as they should see fit.

Lincoln more than challenged the proposition. He opened up the whole broad question. We had sought peace in compromise, and there was none. Understandings were not kept. The Constitution recognized slavery in the states where it was, and for the sake of the Union he would stand by the Constitution. But he insisted that slavery was inherently wrong, and that there was no moral right and no constitutional power to vote it into territory where it was not. "Senator Douglas is logical," he said, "if you do not admit that slavery is wrong. If you do admit that it is wrong, no one can logically say that he does not care whether it is voted up or voted down." That met the issue: but he went much further. Hope was breaking and extreme patience was wearing out; "A house divided against itself can not stand. This government can not permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall. I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other."

Illinois was the best example among the states of a house divided against itself. In sentiment and sympathy, if not in legal structure, it was half slave and half free. The northern boundary is in the latitude of Albany. The southern point is four hundred miles away, in the latitude of Richmond. The northern half was settled by people from New York and New England: the southern half by people from Virginia and Kentucky. He had good reason to understand the irrepressibility of the conflict of opinion. He was the first man of recognized attainments who was the acknowledged leader of a party to be reckoned with, who had the moral courage to present an exact issue and stand for an exact result.

He was not an abolitionist. He would leave slavery where it was, rather than invoke war. He cared nothing about social equality; that was a matter aside from the real question and apart from the law. He venerated the Union. It was the very ark of liberty in America and the hope of real liberty in all the world. He knew what it had cost; he understood its legal basis and framework perfectly; he knew what it was worth. He had made friends with Webster in Congress, had been at his table

many times, and was his ardent disciple. He was for "Liberty and union." There was peril in any separation of the one from the other. He bound them together as Webster did, and made them his watchwords. It had been manifest enough that without union liberty could not be. It had now become manifest to him that without liberty union could not be. He abhorred war, and he would not afford a ground for war which was repugnant to the Constitution. But he would say definitely that slavery should go no further, and then "rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction." If this could not be, he expected it to "become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, north as well as south." Then all liberty would be gone, for slavery fetters the master quite as much as the slave.

In the midst of this memorable discussion, Lincoln took one very distinct attitude upon an all-important subject, which strikingly illustrates his legal learning, his familiarity with history, and his moral courage. It concerned the authority and the right of the people to change the Supreme Court, as well as the statute law, when the court persisted in construing the laws so as to vitalize political policies with which the majority had come to be fundamentally at variance. Without questioning the learning or the motives of the court he boldly charged that political feeling was having its expression through the decisions of the court. He unhesitatingly denied any ultimate obligations of the people to be bound by decisions of the courts upon questions of political opinion and policy. He would obey the determination, for he was against chaos and revolution, but he would hesitate not at all in seeking new laws or a new court, to the end that courts might express progress as well as precedents, and that liberty rather than slavery might have its opportunity. He called Jefferson and Jackson to the support of his contention, and he convincingly exemplified the attitudes of many leading men of all parties. Of course, he was charged with an assault upon the Supreme Court, but the immediate result marked another decisive moral advance in his political career, which perhaps gave him the courage to reassert the proposition in his first inaugural, with an ultimate result which appeared in new laws and a new court.

From first to last in all this, Lincoln had acted practically or completely alone. He had gone forward without support from out of the state, and in spite of the protests of his close friends within the state. Indeed, the support of the weightiest

influences in his party in the nation was given to his great rival to widen the breach in the opposition party; and his intimate associates within the state, who were of a caliber second only to his own, followed him with hesitancy and apprehension. With devotion to the equality before the law which is the great fundamental of our political system, with entire self-effacement, with faith in his own opinions, with absolute freedom of movement, and with undoubting confidence in the people, he opened a new chapter in the political history of his country. Senator Douglas won reelection in the Legislature, but the popular sentiment and decisive majority supported the contentions of Mr Lincoln. Freedom had the moral victory. That gave a new and decisive turn to the course of politics in the country, for it showed discerning leaders whither they must lead unless they were disposed to lose. And it made him the presidential nominee, and in due course the president elect.

The point tonight is the influence of it all upon the man. He hardly seemed the same after this. Happily he never lost his humor, but he jested less. He grew in seriousness. He abated not in plainness, but he grew more rugged. He lost nothing of his gentleness and helpfulness, but there was a new reserve in what he said. His practical sagacity never lessened, but his always deepening purposes and his steadily enlarging responsibility kept him more surely in the very middle of the way. At once he became a national figure, but a national figure was not known to the people then as now. Before the result in Illinois he was suggested for the presidential nomination by the more discerning, and with that result the question was more nearly settled than the mere politicians knew. He carried himself to the political culmination with steadiness and firmness. He said nothing to embitter. His lank figure and lean face grew in attractiveness. When it was settled that his course was to be the course of his country, he said what he could to conciliate the opposition, both north and south, but again and again he took precautions to make sure that nothing which had been gained should be lost in weakness or traded away for any temporary political end.

With the departure from Springfield for Washington there was a yet more frequently expressed confidence in the people, and a yet more freely avowed dependence upon God. "I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I shall return, with a task upon me greater than that which rested upon Washington.

Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I can not succeed. With that assistance, I can not fail." All this became more and more pronounced through the presidential years. .

We all know the full, fascinating, pathetic, heroic story of his presidency. It was a repetition, day by day, of joys and sorrows, of superb humility and of the fearless exercise of extraordinary powers, of dealings with a cabinet of great men who had nothing but patriotism in common with each other or with him, of efforts to get captains who could command, of apprehension, of victories and defeats, of deaths, of fast days, of deprivations and hardships, of more money and more men, of mitigating the misfortunes of war, of misunderstanding and abuse, of unyielding grip upon all the forces that could maintain the Union which he adored, and of undeviating plan to win the universal freedom which was his passion.

The presidential office is a great school for a great man. It is so at all times. It is even more truly so in war. War takes little notice of the law. In a crisis, monarchs ignore the regular order. But American freemen will not accept the ways of either monarchs or rulers. Happily, Lincoln was not of the stuff of which monarchs are made. He was the leader, not the ruler, of the people. He was the executive of a democracy, the expression of the physical, intellectual, and moral forces that were inherent in twenty millions of freemen. It was for him to make the precedents for the presidential office in a time of civil war. And the precedents which he established have become a priceless inheritance of the nation.

Of course his supreme official responsibilities concerned the conduct of the war and relations with foreign nations. History deals freely with the former, but for obvious reasons is rather reticent about the latter. There were idealists and hotheads who would have embroiled us in foreign wars, for there were foreign powers that would have looked with equanimity upon the dissolution of the Union and the failure of democracy. Lincoln had the responsibility both of war and diplomacy, and hesitated at neither. Management served him with the English. He had to tolerate the antagonistic presence of the French in Mexico. Perhaps he held both in check through the definite and declared friendship of the Czar of all the Russias. With such things as mere interludes to the greater acts which bore upon conflicts in the field and upon the seas, and with the knowledge that he was

only the executive of the will of a people, he bore as heavy burdens as ever tried out the soul of man.

Other matters were perhaps quite as trying, though less important, because more immediate and direct. Traders who wanted opportunities, sycophants who wanted jobs, captains who wanted to be colonels, committees of senators who wanted the cabinet changed, delegations who wanted generals removed, and doctrinaires who wanted to go through the lines to stop bloodshed by negotiations, thronged the White House day by day.

Happily, there were some things which brought balm to the spirit. Conventions assured him that they trusted him. Men and women told him that they prayed for him. His "plain people" never deserted him. Through all the grave vicissitudes of the situation, the great heart of the nation throbbed strong and true.

And he did things to mitigate the misfortunes of war. In helping the worthy he soothed himself.

In the hall of the White House he one day found a sick woman, with a baby in her arms, mourning to see her husband who was in the Army of the Potomac. He sent her to the hospital and telegraphed the general in command of the division to send that private soldier to Washington to see his wife. He closed his desk one afternoon and crossed the river to see an honest-hearted Vermont farmer boy under sentence of death for going to sleep upon a sentry's post. He talked to him as his father would, pardoned him, and gave him the opportunity to die honorably for his country upon the field of battle. Upon one of his visits to the hospital his team came upon a mere boy, in the army blue, groping in the roadway. The coachman was annoyed, but the President left his carriage to find that a rifle shot had destroyed both of the soldier's eyes. He comforted the youth with the kindness of greatness, and the next morning made him a lieutenant in the army and transferred him to the retired list, which provided for him for life. When a Washington newspaper which was his severe critic, spoke in commendation of Stonewall Jackson at the time of the melancholy death of that gallant Puritan captain of the Confederacy, Lincoln wrote a note to the editor and thanked him for it. He romped with his boys betimes. He defended the noise that they made, and protected their dogs and goats and ponies. When Willie died, he was close upon the brink. But the exigencies of state allowed little time for a father's grief. Listening to the people through the day, he did the work of the state until

late into the night, often with the little boy who was left playing about his chair, and after the child would fall asleep upon the floor the weary father would work on until nature's protest had to be heeded, and then he would gather up the tired child and bear him to the bed they would occupy together.

There were no vacations; no going back to Illinois; until the clouds broke and the final rest came. But duty, responsibility, greatness, never submerged the human interest that from first to last was in the man. Evenness, steadiness, durability, reliability in full measure, helpfulness for every proper end whether great or small, were all his, and they were given to his country in the hour of her need.

It was a spirit pure by nature and grown great by works, a spirit that had suffered inexpressibly but was capable of no resentment; it was the mighty leader of a grief-stricken but triumphant people, that spoke in the second inaugural. The words are as sacred as the scriptures, of which in part they are. Above all men, Lincoln then knew that peace was at hand, as well as he, of all men, knew, at the time his first inaugural was spoken, that war was at hand. In neither case could he say quite all he knew. If there is sorrow and pleading and firmness in the one case, there is poetry and prophecy in the other. With no note of exultation for the victors with nothing that could touch the sensibilities of the vanquished, he says, "Let us judge not that we be not judged." "With malice toward none: with charity for all." There was no letting down because the culmination was in view. "With firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right." As peace was breaking, "Let it be a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

In a few weeks he had joined the world's immortals. With others I waited at the head of the broader State street at the hour of midnight as the cortege came up the street, and governors, senators, and judges, and all the plain people removed their hats as eight sergeants of the army carried the body of Lincoln into the old Capitol. It was an impressive hour, deepened by the darkness, and the overhanging lights and the stars, and tremendously solemn by reason of the grief that filled all hearts. It was said that none would be admitted to the building before eight o'clock in the morning. Then I would hold my place till eight o'clock. But at two o'clock the gates were opened and I passed by the coffin once, and then went around and passed again, to look a second time upon the face that had grown both gentler

and stronger through the urgings of a pure and lofty purpose and under the discipline of overwhelming events. He had passed through the wilderness and by the Red sea. Upon his soul and upon his face, God and country had done their perfect work. The moral advance had been unceasing, and he who had become one of the world's immortals had ripened for the immortality of the skies.













